

# Street Robbery At Knifepoint

*A 15 year old boy was robbed by two boys who attended the same school. Following a meeting, a detailed agreement was made.*

Gavin, a young person aged 15, was stopped in the street by 2 young people. One of the young people produced a small knife and the other asked Gavin to give them his money. Gavin handed over £5 and the two offenders ran away. The two young people were charged with the offence of robbery and had to appear at the Youth Court. Paul aged (16) pleaded guilty to the offence of robbery. The magistrates asked for a pre-sentence report (PSR) to assist them in sentencing Paul. During the court adjournment period, the PSR author referred Paul to the project. Paul had a previous conviction for shop theft and had lived with his older sister for the past year due to a breakdown in relationships between Paul and his parents. A Project Worker visited Paul and his sister Catherine to assess his suitability and explain the process of victim-offender mediation (VOM). Paul was initially wary of the process but willing to accept responsibility for his actions by meeting the victim. However, once the worker had reassured him that his safety would be protected, Paul gave his informed consent to participate and Catherine agreed to be his supportive adult at the face-to-face meeting. The Project Worker then visited Gavin and his mother Karen to consult them about the opportunity to take part in VOM. Gavin was keen to participate because he knew Paul lived in the local community, attended the same school and that they would probably meet at some time in the future. Karen said she was slightly worried about Gavin meeting Paul and the VOM process. She asked for 24 hours for her and Gavin to think about this. Subsequently Gavin gave his informed consent to participate and Karen agreed to be his supportive adult.

## **Sentencing at Youth Court**

The Project Worker submitted an assessment to the court, confirming Paul's suitability, and that Gavin and Paul had both agreed to participate. Paul was sentenced to a 12 month supervision order, with a condition that he should participate in VOM, with up to six contacts with the VOM service, subject to the continued agreement of the victim to participate. Gavin was free to leave the process at any stage.

## **Preparation Work for RJ Meeting**

Two project workers visited both Gavin and Paul with their carers and undertook an in-depth preparation session. The workers explored what both young people wanted to say at the meeting and what they wanted to get out of the process. The workers also re-visited the ground rules and the process of the meeting and the role of the supportive adult.

### **Face-to-Face Meeting**

The meeting took place in the early evening at a local voluntary sector building two weeks after Paul had been sentenced to his supervision order. The two project workers used the five-stage model of engagement of mediation to assist Gavin and Paul to consider the impact of the robbery and its implications for the future.

- i) Engagement: Gavin and Paul gave their perceptions of the offence. How it affected them at the time and their concerns about the future.
- ii) Issues: Gavin and Paul explored and clarified the issues the offence had caused and might cause for both of them in the future.
- iii) Options: Paul and Gavin looked at what options they had to address the issues they both identified. Catherine and Karen were asked to contribute to discussions about the last 3 points of the agreement.
- iv) Agreement: A formal written agreement was produced outlining how the issues and options would be dealt with.

### **The Agreement**

1. Paul wanted to apologise to Gavin for the effect of the offence upon him. Paul did this during the meeting and Gavin accepted his apology as genuine.
2. Paul and Gavin agreed to treat each other with respect if they met in the community. Their definition of respect meant being polite and not swearing or assaulting each other.
3. Gavin did not want Paul to communicate with him or to approach him at school. Paul agreed that he would not approach Gavin at school.
4. Gavin wanted Paul to agree not to re-offend against him in the future. Paul said he would not re-offend against Gavin in the future.
5. Paul wanted Gavin and his friends to agree not to offend against him in the future. Gavin agreed that he would not offend against Paul in the future. Gavin said that he could not accept responsibility for the actions of his friends but he agreed to try his best to prevent them from offending against Paul.

6. If Paul or Gavin had any problems with each other they agreed to tell their own supportive adult, Catherine or Karen, the same day a problem happened, so that they could help them sort the problem out.

7. Catherine and Karen agreed to contact each other on the same day Paul and Gavin reported a problem, in order to try and help Paul and Gavin sort the problem out.

8. Karen and Catherine agreed to swap phone numbers immediately after the meeting to help with the 2 points above.

v) Feedback: 3 weeks after the mediation had been completed, Gavin and Paul were interviewed by a researcher from a local university as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the project. The project was in the process of establishing a multi-method approach to monitoring and evaluation of VOM. This included the following elements:

- Restorative – satisfaction of offenders and victims with process and agreements
- Rehabilitative – rates and types of any re-offending by offenders
- Retributive – did the offender find the process and outcomes easy or difficult?